to Bear Chief when she was no more than seven. She married him when she was about seventeen. Some girls married before the age of twelve, but many reached their middle teens before they took this serious step. Few young men married before the age of twenty-one. 584 582

It was considered a family disgrace for an unmarried girl to become pregnant. The girl alone was held responsible for her actions. It was something of a disgrace to the families of both boy and girl if they eloped. The socially approved marriage was an important family function. It was arranged by a close friend or a relative of the boy with the girl's father or elder brother. Marriage was simply solemnized by an exchange of gifts between the families of the bride and groom. The first gifts could be offered by either the bride's or the groom's folks. Horses always were the most prized gift. One or more horses were invariably given, along with robes or blankets and household goods of lesser value. Relatives commonly chipped in to make the marriage gifts as imposing as possible. It was expected that the gifts returned by the spouse's family should be more lavish than those they had received. The bride went to live with her husband in a separate lodge or that of his family. 848 583 584 585 431

My elderly informants were very careful to remind me that white men who claimed the Blackfeet used to purchase their wives were misinformed. They stressed the importance of the exchange of gifts in the old-time Blackfoot marriage ceremony. [583]

After marriage it was improper for the husband to speak directly to his mother-in-law. But his ties with the male members of his wife's family generally became very strong. He commonly gave horses to his elder brother-in-law after his return from a successful horse raid. He sometimes gave him choice buffalo meat after a hunt. 602 [606] [607]

Polygamy was common among the Blackfeet because it was a practical means of caring for the excess of women created by heavy war losses. Women outnumbered men by two or three to one. Possession of several wives was one of the distinguishing marks of the successful man. A few of the leading chiefs had ten 595 [182] [556]

20: Hungry Wolf I-4,5 (no date) 1980
NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

606 food for us. She would just call us from outside and say: "Here is something already cooked, for you to eat." That was the old custom. Or she would tell me to come by her tipi later 602 in the day. When I had time I would go over there and she would have a new pair of beaded moccasins for my father-in-law. That was another custom, that the wife's mother made moccasins for the husband's father. When I went to get them I couldn't stay and visit long, because back then it was considered improper for me to be anywhere for long besides my own household. In those days respectful women were not seen idle around the camps, visiting and talking.

831 There were some women in my younger days who were well ● 848 known for their loose ways. They were usually older women, past my own age group. Often they were divorced or widowed. The people had various expressions for them. They would say: "She has a light child" (fathered by someone in town) or "She has been gotten between," or "This one has a white father." Women like this usually kept to themselves, because their friends would be ashamed of them. In my young time we didn't really know much about this, we just heard about it. We didn't know the details for ourselves except as rumors. Nowadays nobody thinks much about this same kind of behavior, because it goes on so much. That is one of the signs of how much life has changed in my time.

THE TIME THE NUNS BROUGHT US TO THE SUN DANCE

by Paula Weasel Head

796 This happened when my sister and I were still quite young, and we were students at the boarding school. It was summertime and the people were camped at the Sun Dance grounds. We were all wanting to go there. I was terribly lonesome for my father, who was camping there too.

ble to comply with these laws and there is nothing in the Indian Act which provides for legalizing an Indian custom adoption. 657 597

However, if a child leaves its own home and goes to live elsewhere, requests are often made to have its name transferred to the new household on the Treaty list. Treaty and Interest money is payable to the head of the family in which the child is living, unless special arrangements have been made. There are cases where parents have attempted to get the child returned to them, usually at the time when Treaty and Interest money is about to be paid.

There is only one recent case of adoption through court procedure on the Agency records. In this case the child was adopted by his mother's mother and her husband. However, the Indians say the child is now back with his mother again, because his grandmother left her husband, and went to live with her daughter, the child's mother.

Property disputes involving adopted children appear to be rare. If a man dies without voicing or writing a will he is considered intestate and one third of his property goes to his widow and the rest to his children or their heirs. Only if a child were legally adopted could he inherit under these conditions. He could inherit under a will but he might have his claims contested by close relatives of the deceased. If a child is adopted in the Indian fashion, but not legally, he can claim against the estate of his own parents when they die. But legal adoptions necessitate relinquishing all claims on the parents. 597 428

CONCLUSION

The Blackfoot picture is not unique. It follows a general Plains pattern. Lowie (1912:219) reporting on the Crow, mentions the frequent adoptions of small children by their grandparents. It was even stated as customary for a young couple to give their firstborn child to the father's parents. With the Blackfoot grandparent adoptions it seems to be equally the mother's and father's family which is involved, with perhaps a bias towards the former. It must be remembered that this also includes all the instances where illegitimate children are cared for by the mother's family, as one would naturally expect. 171 597 [848]

Among the Crow the children of fellow clansmen may be adopted and, under these circumstances, presents are expected from the parents in return or the trouble of bringing up 171 597 431

[P32-B]

122 up onto the stage (is that what you call it in a church?) and slamming hymn books onto the floor.

Earl eased into his sermon by pointing out that this building had in past been the seat of both Christian worship and pagan rites—and a few drunken parties—and the sermon proper wound around the virtue of following a course of sobriety in the face of poverty and frustration. Earl freely admitted his own bibulous history, and [273] indeed most of the Indian men of my acquaintance—and quite a few of the women—have had a drinking problem at some time or other. All the more credit to them, I say, for having overcome it. Even brother Jim squandered a portion of his quixotic youth in jousting with gin-mills and slaying the evil flagon.

Earl is an uncommonly articulate person, and although he made numerous supererogatory references to "The Word," "The Faith," and a few other evangelical "The's," I was greatly impressed by the general content of his message. However, he pulled the well-meant but profoundly annoying small-townism of asking the visitor to stand up and introduce himself and say a few words, and although some people no doubt enjoy this kind of thing it is one of the reasons that I hesitate to visit small churches. God knows you are there, so why turn the whole thing into a sewing bee by taking a bowl (I am reminded of the dowager who arose grandly to tell the congregation—composed largely of Texas stock-breeders and their families—how happy she was to see that so many of them had devoted their lives to "servicing" God.)

122 After the service, I was introduced to the members of the congre-
●848 gation, and this I appreciated. One man, a huge chap, is one of the Chief's sons, and I sort of wish that brother Jim would clue me in on such minor details of existence as his having a few other brothers trotting about the Reservation. I think it quite natural that I should have endowed my patriarchal Indian dad with all the purity of Montana snow, but apparently the snow drifted a bit during its younger days because my new-found brother, it was explained to [554] me, is one of the Chief's "under-the-blanket" children. But of course this fact has no effect at all upon this chap's social status on the Reservation. Some of my White acquaintances—all of whom cleverly prearranged to have themselves born in legal wedlock, but a remarkable number of whom were premature babies—would make smoke with such petty kindling, but the Blackfoots couldn't care less. Nor could I. This man appeared to be in his fifties, which would make him about fifteen years older than Jim.